E L D E R

PAISIOS

1924 - 1994

GODS WISDOM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Η ΣΟΦΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝ

FEASTS AND HOLIDAYS

ΓΙΟΡΤΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΓΙΕΣ

ΑΓΓΛΙΚΗ ΕΚΔΟΣΗ

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His message

First we believe in God and then we love God and His image, the man. Faith increases with prayers. "Add us faith".

"As i have realised all evil comes from unfaithfulness. When someone doesn't believe in God he wants to have fun. So he falls into every kind of sin".

"People must understand the deepest meaning of life that is, that this life is given to prepare us for the future life. The people must find a guide, a religius guide, as the ones who need a guide when they travels. Then with the help of the religius guide people will programme their life, with a little study, a little prayer and avoiding the causes of sin and the wordly thinking which is the worst of all. So their heart will be devoted to Christ".

"We must wrestle with mettle to save ourselves and not to pain Christ. Christ will tell us "My child i have done so many things to save you. I have shed my blood and i have gone through passion, what have you done to save yourself?"

"Each person must find his inclination. The hard-working person, either in married life or in monastic, will be successful".

"We should prefer sadness and accept it more than we accept happiness. The bitter medicine is usually better than the sweet because it cures. Real happiness springs from pain".

"What prevents people from succeding in his spiritual life is the fact that he uses his brain not to improve his spiritual life but to do other things".

"We must feel the pain for our present state to be able to pray with all our heart".

"Now it is the time to seperate the kids from the lambs, the faithful fom the unfaithful. Later there will be time when we take examinations and suffer persecation for our faith and copper will be separated from gold".

"When somebody is troubled because he suffers for other, cares for other, makes their problems his own problems then he will get the pay of a martyr. How lovely are the people who sacrifice everything! They don't have any problems and their face shines because they are filled with God's joy".

"The basis of our spiritual life is to think of the others first and then of ourselves. When we get into the others place and understand them then we are related to Christ".

"God's grace is an expensive thing. It must find the person who spiritually agrees with God to come and stay in his heart. And of course the person must work hard to get it, while we want God's grace to come and release us from weaknesses without struggling for it".

"It takes lots of sacrifice, self denial, modesty mettle to make the Holy Ghost come and stay in people's hearts. Spiritual life isn't enjoyment. Christ has put the plug but our wires are rusty and they don't get God's grace. We should remove the rust from our wires, struggle to know ourselves, stop passions and get the virtues to make God's grace visit us".

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ELDER PAISIOS
(1924 – 1994)

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External Noise and Internal Peace

Text Editors: Mavrokefalos Anestis
Mobile: 6955319555
Fragelakis Panagiotis
Mobile: 6973740058

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ΒΙΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΟ ΣΗΜΕΙΩΜΑ

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Blessed Elder Paisios, whose name in the world was Arsenios Eznepides, was born in *Pharasa* of Cappadocia on 25 July 1924. Shortly before his family left for Greece with the exchange of populations in 1924, the Elder was baptized by Saint Arsenios the Cappadocian, who gave him his own name and foretold that "he was leaving a monk in his place." Upon arriving in Greece, his family settled in Konitsa of Epeirus where the Elder spent his childhood and young adult years.

From the time that he was a child, he lived an ascetic life, and was nourished by the lives of the Saints, whose feats he sought to imitate with great zeal and admirable precision. He practised unceasing prayer, cultivating all along the virtues of humility and love. He learned the trade of carpentry, wanting even in this aspect of his life, to imitate Christ. He fulfilled his military duty during the Guerilla War in Greece (1945-1949), serving for three and a half years in the Army as a wireless radio operator, and living ascetically even during this troubled time. During this time, he was distinguished for his valour, his ethos of self-sacrifice, moral integrity and many other virtues. Having fulfilled his duty to his country, he entered the

monastic life, which he had desired from his youth. Even as a layman, he had divine experiences, but the favour of the Lord, the *Theotokos* and the Saints intensified during his monastic life. He led an ascetic life on Mount Athos, in the Holy Monastery of Stomion in Konitsa, and on Mount Sinai in Egypt. He lived in obscurity, giving himself completely to God, and God in turn revealed him and gave him to the whole world. He guided, consoled, healed and granted peace to the multitudes of people who sought him. His sanctified soul overflowed with divine love and his saintly face radiated the divine Grace. All day long, he tirelessly gathered the human pain and imparted divine consolation.

He is the founder of the Holy Monastery of Saint John the Theologian in Souroti of Thessaloniki, Greece, which he also guided spiritually for twenty-eight years (1967-1994). It was to this Holy Monastery that he also entrusted and treasured the Holy Relics of his Godfather, Saint Arsenios the Cappadocian, to whose memory a temple of Byzantine design was later erected.

After suffering excruciating pains, which, as he used to say, benefited him more than the ascetic struggles of his entire life, he fell asleep in the Lord on 12 July 1994, in the Holy Monastery of Saint John the Theologian in Souroti, Thessaloniki. He was buried next to the Church of Saint Arsenios the Cappadocian.

May we have his blessing, Amen.

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ΠΡΟΛΟΓΟΣ

PREFACE

When the Blessed Elder Paisios fell asleep in the Lord on 12 July 1994, he left behind a spiritual legacy: his teachings. Ever a simple monk, with only an elementary school education, but rich in the wisdom of God, the Elder emptied himself for the sake of others. His teaching was neither instruction, nor catechism. He lived the Gospel, and everything he taught flowed naturally from his way of life, whose main characteristic was love. He had formed himself according to the Gospel and, for this reason, it was his countenance that taught first and then his evangelical love and enlightened word. When he received people of all backgrounds, he did not simply listen patiently to the problems they confided in him, but with his holy simplicity and discernment, he would enter deeply into their heart and make their pain, anxiety and trouble his own. And, then, gradually, the miracle would take place: the transformation of the person. He used to say, "God performs a miracle when we wholeheartedly participate in the pain of our fellow human beings."

We saw with great joy the interest generated by the first books that circulated on the life and teachings of the Elder Paisios. Many spoke with admiration about the

answers they found to their questions, the solutions to their problems and the consolation to their grief. Our joy was even greater when people who had distanced themselves from the Mother Church became rightly concerned and changed their way of life. We often thought of the words of the hymnographer referring to Saint Basil the Great: *He lives, though he lies asleep in the Lord; he lives even among us, as one who speaks through his writings*. At the same time, we felt a compelling need to offer the very beneficial words of Elder Paisios – which we were recording with reverence from the very first steps of our Sisterhood, because they were so helpful to us – to our brothers and sisters in Christ who were so persistently asking for them.

The Good God provided that our *Hesychasterion*[1] owe its very existence to Elder Paisios. It was he who received the Episcopal approval of His Eminence, Synesios, the Metropolitan of Kassandreia, to establish our Monastery and who sought to find the appropriate location. And he did this because his noble and sensitive heart felt great gratitude to us for having taken care of him when we first met him, in 1966, during a hospital stay for a lung operation. From that time on, he felt that he was our big brother and had the obligation to "provide for his sisters," as he used to say, by establishing the Monastery. The first Sisters were settled at the Monastery in October of 1967. Elder Paisios spent two months in the *Hesychasterion* to help in the organization of the coenobitic life. After that, he would come out of Mount Athos, usually twice a year, to help the Sisterhood in their monastic way of life and he would assist each Sister individually in her spiritual struggle, with his God inspired advice and his personal experience. From the Holy Mountain, the "spiritual America", as he used to call it, he continued to help them through prayer and the letters he would send to each Sister individually or to the entire Sisterhood.

1. *Hesychasterion* (pl. *Hesychasteria)* in Greece and outside Mount Athos is a Coenobitic Monastery in which the local Bishop has the right to intervene in spiritual matters alone, but not in administrative matters.

In 1967, when Elder Paisios started establishing the foundations of coenobitic life in the *Hesychasterion*, from the simplest practical things to the most spiritual, he was forty-three years old. He had already attained the mature manhood *to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Eph 4:13) and he had the wisdom of an Elder. From the first days of coenobitic life, we discovered that his words were *the words of eternal life* (Jn 6:68) and that much of what he said should be taken as an axiom for our daily life. For this reason, we felt compelled to write down his words so that they would not to be forgotten and could serve as a secure rule for monastic life.

After we filled the first notebooks, we submitted them with considerable hesitation to his judgment. We hesitated because the Elder always emphasized the practical application; he did not want us just to gather material, "ammunitions", without putting his words into action. He always asked that we cultivate spiritually whatever we heard or read. Otherwise, he used to explain to us, there would be no benefit from all writings and notes just as there is no benefit to a state when it has a lot of armaments but lacks a trained army that will put them in use. Relenting to our persistent pleas, he agreed to see our notes and

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to complete or correct any points that we had not understood correctly.

The recording of his spiritual counsels continued all along the twenty-eight years that the Elder was overseeing and guiding the *Hesychasterion*. All meetings of the Elder with the entire Sisterhood or the Monastery Council and the Abbess were recorded – initially by notes taken down by the Sisters and later by tape recorder. Also recorded were conversations between the Elder and each Sister separately, who wrote down his words immediately after her conversation with him was over. When Elder Paisios realized what we were doing, he was rather irritated: "Why are you taking this down?" he asked. "Are you saving it for an emergency? You should put it into practice; apply it. Who knows what you are saying in these notes! Let me see." When we showed him a sample, the notes of one Sister, his expression changed; he was comforted and reassured, and with satisfaction exclaimed, "My goodness! She is like a tape recorder! She wrote it exactly as I said it!"

Our conversations with Elder Paisios were usually in the form of answers to our questions. In his private conversations with the Sisters, the questions mainly concerned their personal struggle. In meetings with the Monastery Council, which were scheduled in advance, subjects were raised that concerned us during his absence. These were put in the form of questions to be discussed when he came to visit. These questions covered all kinds of subjects: administrative, practical, spiritual, social, ecclesiastical, national and so forth. Finally, in meetings of the entire Sisterhood, besides the questions raised by the Sisters, the Elder discussed various other topics,

which simply came up on the spot, in the course of the conversation. The Elder would use every word and image he could for the spiritual benefit of the soul. The sound of an aeroplane flying over the Monastery, the noise of a machine, the chirping of a bird, the opening of a door or a simple phrase could set him talking for a long time about a serious matter. "I put everything to use," he used to say, "in order to reach Heaven. If we approach and work on all things spiritually, do you know how much spiritual profit can be made and what spiritual experience can be acquired?"

In his contacts with people, Father Paisios sought to prepare them for the Kingdom of Heaven by helping them to know the will of God and come closer to Him. Thus, he put to practice one of his favourite sayings that "the Good God looks after us first for our next life and then for this life." When he mentioned something about nature, science, art or everyday life, he was not interested in these subjects themselves, but used them as parables in order to awaken souls, and to help them grasp the deeper meaning of life and "cling" to God.

Because his manner of speech was simple, spontaneous and full of natural humour, he could tell the greatest truths in a plain and joyful manner. "I am making sunshine," he used to say; he meant that just like the sun is necessary for the flowers to bloom, a gentle pastoral approach enables the opening and healing of the soul. This was his enlightened pastoral care, which often prepared the soil of the soul to receive the austerity of his words about the unyielding and steadfast evangelical truth. In this way, even his most demanding word fell

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upon the human heart as a beneficial dew, cultivating it and bringing forth spiritual fruit.

After Elder Paisios fell asleep, the material that was collected during these twenty-eight years, together with the letters that he had sent to the *Hesychasterion* from the Holy Mountain, was classified according to subject so as to be used everyday in the life of the *Coenobium*. Events relating to his life were also recorded, including those of a divine nature, to which he referred not for bragging but for spiritual charity. "I am not telling you this," he used to say, "so that you can give me ribbons, and bravos. When I tell a war story from the time of my military service, or anything else, even a humorous example, I do so to make a point, so that you can grasp its deeper meaning. I don't like talking about useless things." In this manner he made himself a "spiritual blood donor". He wanted to fortify our anaemic faith, trigger our *philotimo*[2] and, being the noble man of God that he was, to cultivate the same nobility in us so that we can become by grace akin to God. "More and more I am emptying myself," he used to say, "and what is the result? In order to help you, I am forced to speak about myself; this is such a waste, a spiritual waste! Does it at least help you? I want you to know that every time I have to mention an incident from my life, how, for instance, the Providence of God has helped me on a certain occasion, something is being lost; I feel emptier. Does it at least bear fruit for you?"

2. *Philotimo*, according to Elder Paisios, is the reverent distillation of goodness, the love shown by humble people, from which every trace of self has been filtered out. Their hearts are full of gratitude towards God and their fellow men, and out of spiritual sensitivity and a sense of honour they try to repay the slightest good which others do for them.

Taking into account the difficult years that we are living through, we decided to publish all this material in a series of volumes starting with those topics that would be of general interest. Although many of these topics are part of everyday life, they must still be faced according to the Gospel; otherwise, the consequences for this life but also for our future, eternal life will be sorrowful or worse yet, devastating.

In making this decision, we were encouraged by an idea that Elder Paisios had entertained for years. He wanted to write "a book that would reach everybody, laity, monks and clergy." The idea had never materialized, since he gave all of his time to the many hurting souls who came every day to his *Kalyvi*. He gave himself completely to them, despite his limited and diminishing physical strength. "My news," he wrote in one of his letters "is many tired and suffering people. The people and their problems are ever increasing. Please pray that my physical strength not decrease. I need to provide a bit for myself, because I must be always ready to help, whether I can or not."

As already mentioned, the Elder usually responded to a variety of questions. For this reason, when faced with the task of integrating the various topics that he had addressed on different occasions, we decided to keep the dialogue form. Included in these dialogues, are excerpts from letters he had sent to the Monastery, extracts of books that he had written, as well as any additional material from his correspondence with other brothers and sisters in Christ, who entrusted us with their letters and with notes they had kept in their conversations with the Elder.

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The aim was to give each topic the fullest possible coverage. Every effort was also made to preserve, as much as possible, the immediacy and the grace of his spoken words. Some repetitive remarks that stressed the deeper meaning of his word and pierced many hearts were retained, as well as many exclamations, which were a natural part of his story telling, coming from a heart that was pulsating with great love for God and humankind.

References to monastic life are frequent, not only because Father Paisios was addressing nuns, but also because he wanted lay people to seek "the joy of Monasticism" that springs from total surrender to God. He believed that in this way they might be saved from the insecurity caused by a total dependence on the self. He wanted them to enjoy Heaven in this life.

With Pain and Love for Contemporary Man is the first volume of the series *Spiritual Counsels* of the Elder Paisios of Mount Athos. In order to make its content more useful to the reader, it was divided into four thematic parts. Each part is subdivided into chapters and every chapter into sections with the appropriate subheadings. Footnotes that explain terms from the spiritual and monastic life will be more than familiar to those brothers and sisters in Christ who are well acquainted with patristic texts. They have been added in order to assist readers who lack this background.

As Elder Paisios made frequent use of examples from science, art and other fields, as noted above, we ran the risk of not rendering correctly some of his verbal terminology or expressions. For this reason, before publication, we

invited the review of certain sections and chapters from brothers and sisters in Christ who specialise in the relevant areas. We wish to thank them for examining this material with great reverence for the Elder and for making the appropriate corrections. We would, of course, be grateful for any additional suggestions.

We pray that "the spiritual waste" offered by the Elder out of an abundance of love, will bear fruit in the simple and good willing hearts of his readers, and that they will be enriched with the wisdom of God that is *hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes* (Lk 10:21). Amen.

Sunday of All Saints, June 14, 1998

The Abbess of the Holy *Hesychasterion*
Mother Philothei
and the Sisters in Christ with me

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PART TWO

MODERN CIVILIZATION

"Civilization is a good thing but if it is to be beneficial, the soul must also be 'civilized'."

CHAPTER ONE

God's Wisdom and the Environment

"In Wisdom Hast Thou Made Them All"[1]

Geronda, is it right for us to destroy the swallow nests? The swallows leave droppings which soil the area and attract bed bugs.

– Well, can you create a swallow nest? Look at what God has created with just one word! What harmony, what variety! Wherever one turns, one sees the wisdom and the grandeur of God. Look at the celestial lights, the stars; with what simplicity His divine hand has scattered them in the sky, without using a plumb line and level! They give such comfort to people, whereas man-made lights tire the eyes even though they are placed in regular distances. You see, trees planted by man in a forest, resemble an army battalion, whereas natural forests, made of trees of different colours and sizes, comfort the human eye. Natural forests are so peaceful and restful! Some trees are small and others are big, and each one has its own colour. One of God's small wild flowers has more grace

1. Ps 104:24.

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than a pile of fake paper flowers. They differ as much as nylon differs from *aylon.*[2]

Everything that God has made is a wonder in itself. The human body, for example, resembles a factory. God has arranged everything, the heart, the liver, the lungs, and so on with great wisdom. Think of the wisdom with which plants are made! During the German occupation, we used to plant about five irrigated acres of melons. Once, I cut off the big leaves that lie near the roots, thinking that it would be good to clean them out. But those big leaves underneath serve like filters – they are the plant's kidneys – and absorb the plant's bitterness. When the melons ripened … the bitterness was so bad that our tongue was stinging for hours!

– Geronda, you notice everything!

– Yes, I find God in animals, in plants, in everything! How can you not admire it all? You see a tiny bird travelling to Africa and returning to find its old nest without the use of a compass! And people, even when using maps and signs get lost! And it is not as if the birds walk on earth and mark the routes where they pass from. They fly in the sky, high above the sea, and cannot possibly mark these areas. Some small birds climb on the storks, the "aeroplanes", to travel by "aeroplane" to their destination! During their journey over the sea, they stop occasionally on the islands they find on the way to rest.

Once, when I was at the *Kalyvi* of *Timios Stavros* (Holy Cross), I saw a flock of birds coming from the east that looked like sparrows but were bigger and prettier than sparrows. Four or five birds from the flock seemed to

2. A pun; the Greek word *aylon* (ἄϋλον) means immaterial.

have gotten tired and could not fly any more. At that point, about fifteen more birds broke from the flock to join the tired ones and rest on a tree, while the rest of the flock continued to fly. They rested a bit and then took off together. They climbed very high to get their bearings and to find their flock again. What impressed me was that the four or five tired birds were not left alone, but another fifteen of them broke off from the flock to keep them company!

Everything God created is beautiful! Have you seen how beautiful and yet, varied are the colours of kittens' coats? Wherever you turn your head, you will encounter God's wisdom. In the old days, everything was natural and beautiful. You see, when the rooster crows it's not because it is telling the weather. It just sits on one leg and when that gets numb, it crows "cockatoo". But it knows how many hours have lapsed. It switches legs and when the one it is standing on gets numb it crows again. And you know it does that at fixed intervals, at twelve, at three and at six o'clock in the morning, every three hours. It does not even have a clock or a battery and it certainly does not need winding!

Anything that you see or hear in this world, you should use it to reach up to Heaven; let it transport you there. Climb up step by step, from the creatures all the way to the Creator. The Americans went to the moon and at least they placed a sign up there that says, *The heavens declare the glory of God.*[3] The Russians went too, but Gagarin[4] said that he did not find God. How could he

3. Ps 19:1.

4. Yuri Gagarin (1934-1968): Soviet cosmonaut; the first man to be successfully launched into earth orbit (1961).

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possibly find Him, since he went with his feet upward and not with his hands raised up?[5] That's how some people end up saying, "Nature created the universe." The entire universe? Now, an old machine breaks down and a whole group of technicians and workmen gather to repair it. They put their heads together and they try again and again. And it's only an old machine. But God moves the entire globe without electricity and the battery never runs down and the engine never quits! And the earth turns with such a speed that man does not even notice! Isn't that amazing! If the earth were turning slower, man would be tumbling all over the place! Can you imagine that the sea contains so much water and moves with such great a speed without spilling it! Do you realize that the stars with their huge mass move with vertiginous speeds and yet do not touch one another and always keep the same distance? And here comes man and makes an aeroplane and glows with pride! And if he goes a bit mad, he starts making no sense and has no idea what he's saying.

Our Modern "Achievements"

Civilization is a good thing but in order to be beneficial the soul must also be "civilized". Otherwise, we are in for a total disaster. Saint Cosmas[6] said, "Evil will come from those who are educated."[7] Despite the fact that science has advanced so much and made tremendous

5. The Elder implies that Yuri Gagarin did not believe in God; otherwise his hands, in a gesture of prayer, would have been raised toward God.

6. Saint Cosmas Aitolos (1714-1779). His feast is celebrated on August 24.

7. This prophecy of Saint Cosmas' refers to educated people who do not have the fear of God.

progress, when it tries to help people it often ends up harming them, unintentionally. God allows man to do whatever he wants. But when we don't listen to Him, we end up in disaster. The very things we create destroy us.

What have we achieved in this century with our civilization? We have driven people mad and have polluted the atmosphere and the environment. When the wheel leaves its axis, it spins aimlessly out of control. Similarly, when people stray from God's harmony, they are tormented. In the past, people suffered from wars; today they suffer from civilization. Then war made them leave the cities and go to the villages where they lived off a small field. Now they will abandon the cities on account of civilization, because they can no longer live in them. In the past wars brought about death, now it is civilization that brings about diseases.

– Geronda, why has the death rate from cancer gone up so much?

– It's the result of what they did at Chernobyl.[8] This is all man-made ... We live in such a crippled world! Can you think of a time when so many people were sick? It was not like that in the old days. Now all the letters I get in the mail are about cancer or mental disease or strokes or broken homes. This is what I hear everyday. In the past, cancer was rare. You see, back then, people led a natural life. God of course allowed illness, but that's another matter. People ate natural foods and were full of health. Fruits, onions, tomatoes and so on, they were all pure. Now even natural foods will make people sick, because

8. A city of Ukraine; site of a major nuclear power plant accident on 16 April 1986.

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everything around us is contaminated. If things were this way back then, my eating habits would have killed me since being a monk, I ate only leeks, lettuce, onions and cabbage from my garden. And yet, I lived on that diet for years and I was so healthy. Now they use fertilizers and pesticides. Think of all the diseases brought on by food and stress. When science is used indiscriminately, thousands of lives are ruined.

– Geronda, in the past, why did people bear asceticism better and were much healthier than they are today? Did the foods they ate also help?

– Yes, because back then food was pure. This is beyond question. Then they used to eat everything ripened. Now they cut everything before it ripens so that it does not spoil and they keep it in refrigerators. The fruit is gathered while still green and left to ripen. In the old days, fruit would get ripe while on the tree and then it would either fall from it or drop in your palm the moment you touched it. But besides eating good quality, healthy foods – bread and butter and milk were very nutritious foods for children – people would also use their mind and could tell if they got sick because of something they ate. Today, our food is adulterated and on top of that people will not put their mind to work.

And look at how many of the things that we make today are useless! We have gradually done away with wool. It's difficult to find a woollen sweater to absorb your sweat. I put on a woollen undershirt and I can tell right away if it has synthetic material in it, because my body cannot breathe. I experience discomfort and I feel like I am about to suffocate. And they consider synthetic fabrics better, sturdier; they consider it progress! But are

these things healthy? If you consider the way they make them, they are actually quite unhealthy. And the labels will still say, "Pure Virgin Wool"! And they will find even purer words to advertise these products! So now, we raise sheep only for their meat, since we make "wool" from petroleum. And so the silkworm comes to us and says, "If you want better silk, go ahead and make it yourselves"!

People Have Lost Their Patience

– Geronda, why don't we have patience today?

– The current situation does not help people to become patient. In the past, life was peaceful and people were peaceful and had the endurance to be patient. Today haste has invaded the world and people have become impatient. In the old days people knew they could eat tomatoes by the end of June, for example, and they were not concerned about it. They would wait until August to eat a watermelon. They knew in what season they would eat melons or figs. But today they will import tomatoes from Egypt earlier rather than eat oranges which contain the same vitamins. You may tell someone, "Come on, why don't you wait and find something else to eat now?" But no, he'd rather go to Egypt and get tomatoes. When people in Crete[9] realized that, they started constructing hothouses in order to grow tomatoes faster. Now they constructed hothouses everywhere in order to have tomatoes available in the winter. They will work themselves to death to build hothouses, to grow all kinds of foods and

9. The largest island of Greece (Eastern Mediterranean Sea).

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make them available throughout the year, so that people will not have to wait.

And let's say that this is not that bad. But they go even further. The tomatoes are green in the evening and in the morning they have turned into plumb red tomatoes! I scolded an officer of state once regarding this matter. "Having hothouses is one thing," I said, "but using hormones to ripen the fruits, tomatoes and so on, overnight, is going too far because people who are hormone sensitive will be harmed." They have destroyed the animals too: chickens, cattle, they are all affected. They use hormones to make a forty-day old animal appear like it is six months old. Can anyone who eats this meat benefit from it? They give hormones to cows and they produce more milk than the farmers can distribute to market. As a result, the prices fall and producers go on strike, they pour the milk on the streets and in the meantime, we drink milk with hormones. Whereas if we left everything the way God made it, all would go well and people would have pure milk to drink. Notice how hormones make everything tasteless. Tasteless people, tasteless things, everything is tasteless. Even life itself has no taste.

Nowadays, young people lost their zest for life. You ask them, "What will give you peace?" "Nothing," they reply. Such vigorous young men and nothing pleases them. What has happened to us? We believe that we will correct God with our inventions. We turn night into day, so that the hens will lay eggs! And have you seen these eggs? If God had made the moon shine like the sun, people would have gone mad. God created the night so that we may take some rest, and look at us!

We have lost our peace of mind. The hothouses, the use of hormones in produce and in animals have made people impatient. In the old days, we knew that we could reach a certain place on foot in a certain amount of time. Those with stronger legs would get there a bit sooner. Later, we invented carriages, then cars, aeroplanes and so on. We try constantly to discover faster and faster means of transportation. There is an aeroplane[10] which covers the distance between France and America in three hours. But when someone goes from one climate to the other with such great speed it's not good, even the sudden change of time itself can be confusing. Hurry, hurry... Gradually man will enter a projectile and with the squeeze of a trigger, this projectile will be launched only to burst open at some point and allow a madman to emerge! Where is all this taking us? We are heading straight to the madhouse!

They Have Poisoned the Air, but It Is the Bones of the Dead That Bother Them!

– Geronda, they are thinking of starting to burn the dead for sanitation purposes and for saving space.

– For sanitation purposes? Listen to that! Aren't they ashamed to even say that? They have polluted the entire atmosphere and they worry about the bones of the dead? After all, the bones are clean. And what is this idea of saving space? There is the entire country of Greece, with all these forests, and they cannot find some free space? I reprimanded a university professor about this one day.

10. The Elder means the long-range, supersonic, passenger aeroplane, the Concorde. It flies faster than the speed of sound.

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How come they can find space for garbage but not for bones that are sacred after all? Isn't there any free space anywhere? And do they realize how many bones of saints may be among them? Don't they even think of this?"

In Europe they burn the dead, not because of lack of space but because they consider it progressive. They will not open a forest, but they will burn the dead to make space. They turn the dead into ashes and place them in a tiny box for more convenience and they consider this progress. This way the nihilists get their way, which is to eliminate religious and moral principles, everything, human beings included. They don't want anything to remind people of their parents, their grandparents or the life of their ancestors. They want people to be divorced from their tradition. They want to make them forget the future life and to tie them down to this one.

– But they say, Geronda, that there is a real problem in some municipalities in Athens; they have no space to bury the dead.

– There is so much space, how come they cannot spare some? There are so many public grounds outside Athens. I know many powerful people who own large areas of land out there! Can't they convert them to a cemetery? And by the way, most people come from the provinces. Why don't they take them back to their place of birth? They should bury each person in the place of their birth. And except for the transportation cost, the rest of the expenses will be lower too. They must issue an order that anyone who has come to Athens recently from the provinces, is to be buried in their place of origin. And this is better. Now, for those who have been in Athens for three generations, they should find a way of burying them there. And later,

when they exhume the bones, they can dig deeper graves and place the bones there. Is that difficult? People can dig so deep into the earth to extract coal. Let them make the effort to prepare some large area to gather all the bones.

There is no respect left. And you can see what is happening now. Old parents are being put away in retirement homes. In the old days, they used to take care even of their aged oxen; they would not slaughter them, because they thought, "*We have eaten bread through them*," as the saying goes.

In the past there was such respect for the dead! I remember the risks we took to bury the dead during the War. Not only the priest, who was obliged to go anyway, took risks, but also the soldiers who had to carry the dead through the snow, in freezing cold under enemy fire. In 1945, during the War, before I joined the army, I used to transport the dead with the church sexton. The priest went ahead with the censer and we followed. When we heard a bullet fly by, we would fall to the ground. It was difficult to get up after that. And when we heard another bullet, again we would fall to the ground. Later, while still serving during the War, we did not have boots and had to go barefoot in the snow and they ordered us to go and remove the shoes of some soldiers who had died. Not one of us moved. But those good years are gone now!

The problem is that those in power who could protest are not doing so because they support cremation. As for the Church, since this problem has come up, it must take a position and resolve it. Otherwise, we will leave the charge of spiritual things to lay people and whatever they say will be the rule. This is impiety. How can people have God's blessing under these circumstances? They are

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trying to gradually degrade human beings. But it will not happen the way they want. Somehow ample space will be found … you'll see, it will.

Pollution and Destruction of the Environment

The sun is hot in the Sinai desert even in winter, because they have opened holes in the atmosphere. Without the northerly breeze, it's impossible to stand under the sun for long.

– Geronda, what's going to happen with the ozone?

– We must show a little bit of patience until the scientists go up there with five kilos of putty and plug the hole up!! Yes, let them go up to plug the holes, and they will realize that God has made everything to be good, to be in perfect harmony, and perhaps then they will say to the Lord, "Have mercy on us, we did not do things right." Let's pray that the hole, which has been opened in the atmosphere, will be closed. Indeed, a *bowl full of the wrath of God* is now open in the sky and is causing trees and plants to wilt and dry up.[11] But God could do away with this problem.

And now look at how cunning some people are! In order to get money out of the very wealthy, they spread the rumour that a hole has opened in the atmosphere and the world will vanish. The only way to save the world is for scientists to dig deep into the earth and avoid the sun. Of course, this cannot happen. And so they change their story and make another claim that facilities will be built on the moon – restaurants, hotels, housing – and people

11. Cf. Rev 15:7.

will go there. And they are even taking down payments to secure a spot! The whole thing is a lie! There's nothing up on the moon. Human beings cannot live there. Only one or two persons went up there, in a capsule, and came back. And there are some people who believe this nonsense and pay money for it.

– Geronda, many people worry about air pollution.

– This is why they must put pressure on factory owners to place anti-pollution devices and save people from all this smog. Instead of bribing members of parliament to take care of their interests, they should pay a little more money to install anti-pollution equipment in their factories. In the old days, there was no smog, no contamination like we have today. Today everything is polluted and people take that to be progress. How could this ever be considered progress, when they are destroying human beings? You go out of your house, and the air smells of fumes. As soon as you open the window, the smog comes in and sticks on your skin. Even when you wash your hands, you cannot get rid of it because it is not something pure. Smoke from the fireplace is exhaled by our lungs when we cough, but smog will not be exhaled because it contains oils and gets stuck there.

In apartment buildings, people are piled up one on top of the other. When one dusts their clothes, the dust falls on the balcony below. I pity those who live on the first floor; they get all the dust and garbage of their upstairs neighbours! They have their clothes hanging out to dry or their window happens to be open and people throw their dusting from the floor above with no consideration for those below. In the old days, these modern apartment buildings would have been taken for prisons, like *Yiendi*

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Koule.[12] It's just so dreadful. Years ago, our houses used to have a yard, animals, a garden, and a few trees where birds would gather.

– Nowadays, Geronda if you live in the city it's rare to see even a swallow!

– Are the swallows crazy to go and live there? Gradually people will forget what a swallow looks like. In America, at the Theology department of a University that specializes in the history of the Old and New Testament, in order to make students understand what wheat is, they cultivate some on their grounds. And in order to make students understand what a shepherd and ewe are, they brought a small flock of sheep with a shepherd holding a shepherd's rod. And they call this a University!

The air has been polluted. Even in the winter we can smell the stench of garbage! Imagine how bad it gets in the summer! And they won't send an aeroplane to spray with disinfectant! We are lucky that God has made flowers with fragrant aromas. All these flowers, with their various forms and sizes, remove the stench with their fragrance. If we did not have that in the atmosphere, what would happen? It only takes one dead animal and the stench is unbearable. God takes such good care of us! What would we do if He ever abandoned us? With all these natural perfumes around, our own, human stench goes unnoticed. And besides, flowers give us so much delight!

Once, a layperson came to my *Kalyvi* and asked me, "What are you doing here day and night, all the time?" Everything around me was in full-bloom, a slope full of

12. *Yiendi Koule* is the Turkish name of an historical prison in the walls of Thessaloniki.

flowers! There was a sweet fragrance everywhere! So I said to him, "Do you know what I must go through to water and take care of all the things you see? And do you see how many vigil lamps I light in the sky every night?[13] I do not have enough time to light them all." He was looking at me dumbfounded. "Don't you see all the lamps up there at night? I am the one who lights them. How could I possibly have enough time; it's not easy with so many lamps, to change the wick, to pour the oil!" The poor soul was at a loss for words.

Spraying disinfectants is poisonous too. On top of everything else, it also kills the poor birds. They spray the trees to protect them from disease but, as a result, people end up getting sick. Thus, everything is poisoned. Wouldn't it be better if we sprayed less and buried the rotten fruit in the landfills instead of producing excessive amounts and throwing the good ones away? The vapours from spraying are naturally harmful to man and can prove fatal for young children. This is one reason why they are born sick. I once said to someone, "What's going on? You have killed the insects and now you are killing people." They spray the flowers to kill the insects and people get sick. Next thing you know, they will make even stronger pesticides and what will come out of it?

It has been proven that some of the insects they exterminated were actually killing other harmful insects. Now we will try to develop these insects again so that they can kill the others. God has arranged everything so well! Wherever there are crickets there are no mosquitoes. A person came to the *Kalyvi* with a small device that

13. The Elder meant the stars.

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produced a harsher version of the cricket's sound to repel mosquitoes. They have killed the crickets which, after all, made a sweet sound, and now they are trying to imitate their sound, which God has made, with a battery run device! They have killed everything, the crickets; the turtledoves... It is rare to see even a raven today. Soon, we'll be exhibiting ravens in a bird cage.

When you spray the trees, let God help you a little. If the pesticide does not go everywhere, it does not matter. We have all kinds of means today for so many things, but nothing to strengthen our faith. I hear people ask, "Have they come up with a medicine for this? Where is it? Abroad?" And they rush to the phone to find out how to get it. Gradually, lay people and even monastics are putting God aside. You see, if spiritual progress came first, if that was our priority, everything would be made holy and good. The problem is that those of us in monastic life are not far ahead from lay people when it comes to spiritual progress.

– But Geronda, dacus[14] is harmful to the olive trees.

– Pray with a *komboschoini* for the dacus to leave the trees. Do not just rely on spraying; try praying; put some Christ in your work. We are making an effort to do things right as if we lived in the world, and it does not even cross our mind that we who live the monastic life must be concerned with the other world (*cosmos*). We should not try to compete with those who live in the world. Where is Christ? What have we done with Him? I am not saying that you should not spray at all; but just keep in mind that others are still experimenting testing chemicals and so on.

14. An insect.

And when you must spray you should always wear masks. It is better to have some fruit afflicted by dacus than to try and spray everything in sight. Try and cut down on the number of sprayings. Instead of spraying everything, try to pray with devotion. Read the first Psalm[15] and sprinkle some Holy Water on the trees. When you live correctly, you will get the rain you need[16] and the caterpillars[17] will die. God will provide for you. You need to have devotion and trust in God.

15. Saint Arsenios the Cappadocian used to read the first Psalm when the people of Pharasa planted trees in order to bear fruit.

16. This was said in November of 1990 when there was a severe drought.

17. In June of 1990 there were a lot of caterpillars.

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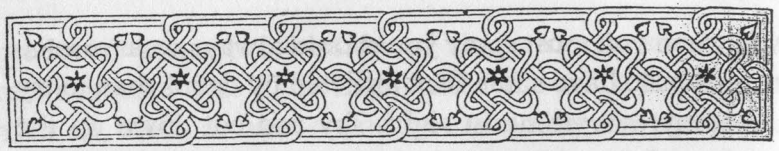

CHAPTER THREE

Feasts and Holidays

"Let Us, the Faithful,
Celebrate a Spiritual Feast"[1]

Our Lord Jesus Christ, with His great love and joy which fill the souls of the faithful during His holy feast days, exalts us spiritually and truly resurrects us. All we need to do is participate in these feasts and celebrate them with a spiritual appetite; for once we taste the heavenly wine to which the Saints will treat us, we will become drunk in spirit.

– Geronda, what must we do to live a spiritual life during these feasts?

– To live through Christ's feasts in a spiritual way, we must keep our minds focused on the holy days themselves and not on the work that we have to do to prepare for them. We should think about the events of each holy day (Christmas, Theophany, *Pascha* and so on) and say the Jesus Prayer glorifying God in our heart. This way we will celebrate with reverence every feast day of the

1 This is a *troparion* of the 6th ode to the second Canon of the Feast of the Entrance of the *Theotokos* into the Temple (November 21).

Church. For most people, who live in the world, Christmas is the time to eat pork, *Pascha* to eat lamb and the Carnival at the beginning of Lent, the time to throw confetti. But for the true monks, every week is Holy Week. Every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday they experience Holy and Great Wednesday, Holy and Great Thursday, and Holy and Great Friday, that is, the days of the Passion of Christ, and every Sunday is for them *Pascha*, the Day of the Resurrection. Why must we wait until Holy Week to remember the Passion of Christ? Why should we be like people who live in the world? Can't we realize what *Christ is risen* means, without eating lamb? You see, Christ said, *Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.*[2] He did not say, "Get ready right now!" From the moment Christ said, "Be ready!" we must all, but especially monks and nuns, be constantly vigilant and ready.

We must study and live through these divine events all the time. When someone studies the events of each feast day, he will be naturally moved to pray with particular reverence. Then, during liturgical services, our mind will be absorbed by the events we are celebrating and we will follow with great reverence the chanting of hymns. When our mind thinks divine thoughts, we get to live through these holy events, and in this manner we are transformed. We think of a Saint for whom we have a special devotion, or of the Saint whose feast day we are celebrating, and our mind rises higher toward Heaven. And when we keep the Saints in mind, they keep us in mind too, and they come to our assistance. This is how

2. Mt 24:44.

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we can start a friendship with them, one that will last forever. And so, even though we may live alone, we will actually share our lives with everybody: with the Saints, the Angels, the whole world. Imagine, being alone, and feeling their company! This is the living presence of the Saints who are God's children and will reach out to help us, their poor brothers and sisters.

Our Saints have shed blood, sweat and tears for the love of Christ. We should always celebrate them with reverence, and they will be there to help us. Every time we hear their *Synaxarion* "On this same day, we commemorate Saint …," we must rise to our feet, like soldiers standing at attention when the names of their fallen comrades who died heroically are being read. "On this day of the month … soldier so and so ... fell in action heroically defending the country in such and such a front."

If we want to really feel the significance of a feast day, we must abstain from all work. On Holy and Great Friday, for instance, the only thing we should be doing is praying. For people who live in the world, Holy Week is full of chores and obligations. On Holy and Great Friday, they will exchange good wishes "Happy Easter! May you live a long life! May your son find a good bride!" This is so wrong! On Holy and Great Friday, I will lock myself in my *Kalyvi*. Silence will be of great help to the soul during feast days. It's very much like the time that follows the reception of the *Great Schema*, when a monk or nun will spend a whole week in silence to allow divine Grace to fill the soul and to appreciate what has actually taken place. In silence, we get the opportunity to rest a little, to study and pray. When a good thought crosses our mind, when we examine ourselves, or say the Jesus Prayer, we

will really come to feel something of the divine event celebrated on that day.

"Better Is a Little That the Righteous Has"[3]

It is unfortunate that in our days we don't use freedom to do good and become holy; instead, we use freedom to become more secular. In the past, people would work all week and rest on Sunday, a holy day. Now, they rest on Saturday as well. But are their lives more spiritual? Or are they more sinful? If people spent their time on spiritual work (prayer, spiritual study and so forth), things could have been different; people would live more conservative and decent lives. But we poor human beings try to rob time from the spiritual things, from Christ. People who live in the world will arrange to do all their heavy chores on Sundays. They are trying to find one Sunday for this chore, a holy day for another, and that's how they bring God's wrath on themselves. Why would the Saints then come to their assistance? Turn Sunday into a chore day? Never! Even if others offer to help us on that day, we should never accept it. Not on a Sunday.

We will not allow God to be in charge. And so, everything that we do without faith in God has nothing to do with Him; it belongs to the world. It does not have His blessing and for this reason the outcome is never good. When this happens we like to say, "It's the devil's fault." Well, not really. It's not the devil's fault but ours, for not letting God help us. When we work on holy days, we give the devil rights and then he gets involved in our

3. Ps 37:16.

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affairs. The Psalm reads, *Better is a little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked.*[4] This is the kind of life that will receive a blessing. The rest is as worthy as shavings. But in order to live this way, we must have faith, *philotimo* and reverence, and put God in charge of our lives. Otherwise, we'll never get the job right whether it is on holy days or on week days and we'll end up spending our time on nonsense. And you'll see that God will never abandon you. I have never worked on a Sunday or a feast day, and God has never left my side and has always blessed my work.

I remember once, some threshing machines were brought to the village, and my father was notified that they could start on Sunday from our fields, and then move downhill to other lots. My father said to me, "What should we do? The machines are here." "There is no way I will work on Sunday," I replied. "We can do it on Monday." "But," my father objected, "if we miss this opportunity, we'll have such a hard time threshing with the horses." "That's fine with me," I said. "If I have to, I'll be threshing all the way to Christmas." So, I went to Church anyway, without giving the matter any more thought. Well, as the machines started coming toward our field, they broke down. "Forgive us, but the machines won't work. We'll take them to Yiannena and fix them, and when we come back on Monday, you will be first in line"! So instead of threshing on Sunday, they ended up threshing on Monday. I've seen this kind of thing happen so many times.

4. Ps 37:16.

If Monks Won't Observe Feast Days, What Are Laypeople Supposed to Do?

How different was the spirit of Monasticism in the old days! I remember how laypeople, who celebrated the Feast of the Holy Cross according to the new calendar, would come to the Holy Mountain after the feast and bring us grapes. Sometimes, the day they arrived, we would be celebrating the Feast of the Holy Cross according to our calendar. But the Fathers would never go to unload the boat on such a day. They would send them back, or just leave them there, both the caique and the grapes. They would do the same if an olive oil or wood shipment would happen to arrive on the day of a feast. And the Monasteries were poor. The monks were thinking "What will people say if they see monks working on this day?" They would rather have a storm take the load, and lose the oil and the grapes, than to go and unload the ship, miss the Feast and scandalize souls.

Not so today... I happened to be at a Monastery on the eve of a feast day, and the monks were unloading grapes. The entire *Coenobium* later gathered together to squeeze them. That night they were supposed to have a Vigil, but they decided to postpone it and transfer it to another time. And that was a major Feast! "In the case of need even a law may be transferred..." In another place, they were repairing a Monastery damaged by fire, on a Sunday. Just wait ... it will burn down again! When people who live in the world see these things, they naturally say to themselves, "Feast days mean nothing anymore."

We monks should be especially careful not to work on feast days, not only because doing so is a sin, but

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because we also become a cause for scandal; we sin twice. People who live in the world are looking for an excuse to justify their sins. They may be working day and night and never observing the feasts, but let them see a monk or nun working on some emergency, and the devil will whisper to them, "Take a look; if priests work, why not you?" A nun may be seen simply airing a blanket on a Sunday, and if people see her, they will think, "Well, if nuns are working, what's wrong with us going to work?" That's why we need to be very careful; we don't want to cause a scandal.

– Geronda, what if a workman wants to work on a feast day, let's say on the Entrance of the *Theotokos* to the Temple?

– To work in the Monastery on the Feast day of the Entrance of the *Theotokos* in the Temple? No, that's not right! He should not be allowed to work.

– Geronda, this actually did happen. One of the Sisters did not think of telling the workman to come another day.

– Then the Sister needs to be given a canon.[5]

– Geronda, on a feast day, after the Vigil is over, if one becomes sleepy, can they do some handiwork while saying the Jesus Prayer?

– Can't she do prostrations? Let her do prostrations to overcome her sleepiness. Why do handiwork?

– How about on Sunday? Is it right to weave a *komboschoini* after a Sister has performed her spiritual duties?

5. *Canon*: the discipline imposed by a Spiritual Father upon the believing sinner in the context of the Mystery of Repentance, for his or her correction. Such discipline could take the form of fasting, almsgiving, prayer, abstinence from Holy Communion for a specified time and so on.

– Why should you weave a *komboschoini*? Why not enjoy this day's full spiritual nourishment? Unfortunately the spirit of the world is entering our Monasteries. From what I hear, there are Monasteries where, on Sunday afternoons or in the afternoon of a feast day, they will return to their chores and duties. As if they have children that are dying from hunger or owe heavy debts that will force them to auction their house! Where's the need? Of course, it's different with the monk or nun who serves the visitors, or the cooks who serve in the kitchen. Someone needs to be there to do the necessary work.

Sometimes people bring me fish. "Take it and go away," I tell them. What will happen if people start bringing a live fish here, a dead fish there? If someone brings you fish here in the Monastery on a feast day, you would have to clean and cook it and so on. How will you be able to enjoy the feast day? Do you remember Father Menas in the *Skete* of Saint Anna?

A fisherman brought him fish on a Sunday morning, for the feast day. "They're fresh, Geronda," he said. "Today is Sunday, when did you catch them and they're so fresh?" he replied, puzzled. "This morning," the man answered. "Throw them away, son, they're anathematized," Father Menas responded. "And if you want to make sure that I'm telling you the truth, give one to the cat and see if it will eat it." And indeed, the fisherman threw the cat a fish but the animal turned its head away, with repulsion. That's how sensitive monks were in those days!

Now, on great feast days, you'll see Monasteries full of workers and technicians… Once, on the Feast of the *Theotokos* in August, a Monastery had a whole crew working with chain saws in the forest, gathering wood.

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Even though it was a clear day, suddenly it got cloudy, and lightning struck just next to the woodcutters, who were so terrified that they left without even notifying anyone that the forest was on fire. It took them forever to put out the fire. The following Sunday, two wood cutting crews went out again. These fires are God's wrath, because we have turned Sundays and feast days into working days. And the sad thing is that we don't realize what we are doing. We are pushing God's tolerance and patience to its limits.

If there is a need for something, the monks will pray, saying the Jesus Prayer one hundred times each, and God will enlighten someone to send them one hundred thousand drachmas. The monk's job is prayer. If we don't put out trust in God, who will? Those who live in the world? God feels obligated to hear the prayer of the monk who has entrusted his life to Him. When I lived in the *Coenobium*, there was a monk who assisted the Abbot. He was not quick at all; in fact, he never left before the Divine Liturgy ended, and yet he always managed to finish all his chores. I, on the other hand, who was quicker and left before the Liturgy ended to prepare the assembly room, would be running into all kinds of problems. Sometimes I would mishandle the coffee beaker and the coffee would spill all over; other times I would drop the cups and the glasses; something would always go wrong! But he would wait until the end of the Liturgy. He would cross himself and trust in God to help him. If he were ever reprimanded, he would accept it with humility. He was humble and benefited twice as much.

When we don't get stuck on unimportant details, which would cause no harm if omitted, we will benefit twice as much from whatever good we do, and give to

the Saints, whose feasts we celebrate, double the praise they are due. We should try to the best of our ability, not to devote ourselves to work at the expense of our spiritual life, which should always come first; this way, no matter what job we do, we'll have the blessing of God. It's our spiritual life that must come first, not material things. If we put our work ahead of everything else and put prayer in second place, this means that for us work is more important than prayer. It is pride and irreverence that lie behind this attitude. The work of the spiritually bankrupt cannot be sanctified. If we put spiritual matters first, God will take care of us. When we monks don't observe feast days, what are laypeople supposed to do? If we don't do our spiritual work and plead with the Saints to help us, who will? What happens is that we end up saying all the time that we believe in God, but in reality we don't even trust in Him. If we monks and nuns, who wear the monastic cassock, will not respect the Canons of the Church, and violate and dishonour Her age-old traditions, what possible meaning can our lives have?

Calamities Befall Those Who Work on Sundays and Feast Days

Normally, we m all work before the Vespers of Sunday or of a feast arrangements can be made, it is better to work more o previous day, and avoid any work after the Vespers o festal celebration. It is a different matter, if, in the event of an emergency, some light tasks need to be taken care of in the afternoon of a Sunday or a feast day. But even in such cases, the work should be done with discretion. In the old days, when

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farmers out in the fields heard the church bell announcing Vespers, they would do the sign of the cross and cease all work. The women of the neighbourhood would do the same. They would stand up, cross themselves and stop knitting or anything else they were doing. And God would bless them. They had their health and enjoyed life… Now they have abolished the feast days, distanced themselves from God and the Church, and not surprisingly, end up spending all the money they earn on doctors and hospitals… Once, a man came to my *Kalyvi* and said, "My boy gets sick very often and doctors cannot figure out what's wrong with him." "Stop working on Sundays and things will change," I told him. He followed my advice, and his little boy recovered.

I always tell people that if they want to avoid calamities in their life, they should stop working on Sundays and feast days. Work schedules could be arranged to keep these days free. Where there is spiritual sensitivity, everything is possible; solutions will be found. That's really the issue here. Even if a particular solution is to our disadvantage, and we suffer a loss, in the end we'll be twice blessed. But so many people fail to understand this. They do not even attend the Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy sanctifies. If a Christian will not [illegible]urch on Sunday, how will he be sanctified?

It's unfortunate, but, [illegible]ings are going, people will do away with f[illegible]ys, and with everything else. You see, they are [illegible]changing their names, and are forgetting their Sa[illegible] whose name they bear. If they are named *Vasilike*, they change it to Vicky; *Zoe* (Life) to *Zozo* – which sounds like saying *zo* (animal) twice! They have come up with new feasts, Mother's Day, May Day,

April Fools' Day... Pretty soon they'll say, "Today is Artichoke Day, tomorrow Cypress Day, later the birthday of the inventor of the atom bomb, or of soccer and so on..." But God will not abandon us…

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